

Government and Christianity:

A SERMON FOR THE TIMES.

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PHILADELPHIA:
C. SHERMAN & SON, PRINTERS.
1861.

This Discourse was preached in St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church, Race Street below Sixth, Philadelphia, on Sunday morning, May 5th. It has been thought that it would be of service if circulated in print. It is with this prayer and hope that it is committed to the public.

DISCOURSE.

Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king as supreme, or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well-doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: as free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God.—1 PETER 2: 13-16.

GUIDED by these words, it is my purpose to speak to you this morning concerning the teachings of the Scriptures upon civil and political relations and obligations. It is part of the minister's duty to declare the counsel of God upon these as upon other points. Jesus himself did not avoid the theme when the occasion offered, but lifted up His voice in the presence of friends and enemies, saying, "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's." The peculiar and critical condition of our national affairs, the importance of being well instructed in reference to our whole duty in times like these, and the danger of being hurried along by

excitements, or restrained by false fears, when we should be prepared to act on moral and Christian convictions, instead of the mere impulses or enthusiasm of the hour, would seem to mark this as a becoming time to take up the subject, and to review at least its leading features.

Some of our fellow-citizens are in arms against the established and authorized government of the land. They have openly declared that they will not submit to its authority. They have seized upon some of its possessions, battered down some of its fortifications, and gathered armies seemingly to overthrow it. Their troops are menacing its capital, and marching to dislodge its proper officers. The chief magistrate of the nation has called for an army of defence, and for the enforcement of the national laws. Some of the States have been busy in furnishing soldiers, and others have refused to act in the case. Some of you have given your sons, your brothers, your husbands, and your money and labors, whilst others about you have not hesitated to rebuke such proceedings, and to turn their backs upon them as unchristian and unrighteous. And it cannot be a matter of indifference, in such a condition of things, to turn aside from all secular, sectarian, philosophic or political disputations and speculations, to inquire a little of those unfailing oracles, which speak so wisely and so truly on all

the great questions of human interest, and learn what are the teachings of that glorious record, whose every direction is ratified in heaven, and whose every precept is a finger-board pointing the way to glory, honor, and immortality. "To the law and the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." Personal feelings and prejudices, individual prepossessions and party disputes, may indeed render it difficult to imbibe the genuine spirit of Christianity in the case, but the words are so plain, that if we will come to the subject with hearts willing to learn, we cannot fail to receive instruction upon many points otherwise doubtful, or to have our hearts the more stayed in paths in which we can look up and say with unfaltering firmness, that they are the paths of duty and of God.

Looking, then, for the gracious aid which Heaven has promised to them that seek it, I will proceed to sum up and illustrate, in distinct propositions, what I learn from the Scriptures as to the points which at present concern us *as Christians in relation to the State.

And here, at the very start, I am obliged to state a truth which some may receive with disfavor, but which is nevertheless a truth, and one which it is important for us to know; namely, that

I. PATRIOTISM, OR MERE LOVE OF COUNTRY, AS SUCH, IS NO PART OF THE INCULCATIONS OF THE GOSPEL.

Not even the word, nor anything equivalent to it, is to be found in the New Testament, or the Old. It would seem to be right, and according to nature, for a man to have some love and sympathy for the place which afforded him his first breath ; some gratitude towards the Constitution which protected his parents while they educated and provided for him ; and some special regard for the people, institutions, and welfare of his own native country. Neither does the Gospel condemn such sentiments. But they have their seat in a mere passion or impulse of nature, concerning which the Scriptures say nothing. Within certain limitations this passion is quite justifiable and proper, and is not without the sanction of Scriptural examples ; but, like all natural passions, it needs regulation. It is nowhere enumerated among the Christian virtues. It hardly appears to have had a distinct name among men, until it received it from the hands of French infidelity. We search our Bibles in vain for any clear^d recognition of it, or for any precepts which enjoin or indorse it, as a part or requirement of Christianity. In all the numerous references of the New Testament to civil relations, it does not receive one single commendatory notice. Duties to the community are prescribed with

great explicitness, but they are never put upon the basis of love for one's native land. It would seem as if God were very suspicious of this passion, and as if, in his view, it required curbing and restriction, much more than encouragement. It is quite too narrow, and mingles quite too readily with the worst selfishness, to claim a place in the inculcations of the blessed Jesus. Sectionalism is part of its essential nature. It looks simply to small portions of mankind and human interest, and is ever disposed to treat all else as inimical, or as made only to minister to its service and aggrandizement. It therefore does not always harmonize with that Christian affection which teaches us to regard even enemies as in some sense our friends, strangers as neighbors, and every man as a countryman and a brother. And if we will but divest ourselves of natural prejudice, and contemplate it calmly, apart from the false glare in which it appears, in heathen classics, and trace it in all its practical outworkings, we shall not want for reasons to conclude that it was worthy of the wisdom of the blessed Saviour, that He refrained from pronouncing a single word of encouragement to this passion, except so far as it may be made to express or comport with a generous charity towards all men. Praiseworthy and beautiful as patriotism is when under proper control, it is a passion exceed-

ingly liable to excess, prone to absorb and override more important requirements, and apt to induce forgetfulness not only of individual interests, but of the immutable claims of humanity and justice. How was it in those nations and with those people among whom it was most vigorous and powerful? How was it in the Roman republic, even in its most virtuous times? How did it exalt the country into an idol, at whose shrine her greatest patriots were ever ready to sacrifice whole hecatombs of human beings? How were the interests of other nations disregarded, and trampled, and held to be for no purpose but to minister to the riches and glory of Rome? Resolve that disdainful *patr e amor* into its true essence; strip it of its poetic gilding and reduce it to reality; and what was it but an immense and insatiable public selfishness, a mammoth league against the peace, the liberties, and the independence of mankind? Proud and impatient zeal for one section, or for one set of political associations or principles, is almost certain to have in it much that is unjust to whatever conflicts with it, and is ever ready to fire up into all sorts of extravagance, violence, and wrong, to what is not of itself. It is to this very passion, perhaps, more than to anything else, that we may trace the troubles, anxieties, commotions, and dangers which at this moment convulse and threaten these once United

States. A fiery and excessive devotion to sectional interests and institutions, and a bigoted enthusiasm for supposed rights and dignities of native States, heated into uncompromising intolerance of everything but what relates to its own emolument and exaltation, have furnished the material for that unaccountable frenzy of our Southern people which is racking the whole nation to dissolution, and for the sake of which many have shown themselves willing to break through the most solemn oaths, risk their fortunes, honor, and lives, and to sacrifice a country which was the jewel of nations, and the very crown of the world. Who will say that these secessionists have no earnest zeal for their own States and institutions? Who will not rather say that they are *mad with love of country*, as embraced in what they view as their highest joy and pride? We thus have an illustration at our own doors as to the lengths of impiety, selfishness, rebellion, and ruin, to which this feeling is capable of driving men. Indeed, I know of no more dangerous passion, or one more malignantly fraught with mischief to all that is good and hopeful in the world, than this very thing called *patriotism*, when left to work unchecked and unmodified by broader, higher, more philanthropic and more Christian views and balances. "Pampered to excess," says Robert Hall, "it loses the name of virtue, and is the bond and cement of guilty confederation."

As Christians, therefore, we have need to be cautious as to how far we surrender ourselves to a passion so inferior to Gospel charity, and so prone to take shapes in contravention of every principle of justice and the common brotherhood of the race. God may be for Cæsar, and loyalty to Jehovah will often require activity and sacrifice for Cæsar; but Cæsar is not Jehovah, and zeal for him is not always fidelity to God. Patriotism is to be Christianized, but we need to be on our guard against *patriotizing* Christianity. Religion is to be carried with us into politics as well as into everything else; but to carry politics into religion is an inversion of Divine order, a rendering of the sacred subordinate to the secular, and an offering of strange fire on the altar of God. And such a zeal for country as would confine our affections to one "pent up Utica," or in any way curtail or set aside impartial justice and charity to all men, ought, I think, to be resisted as having transcended its sphere, and avoided as an undue license of a mere natural and dangerous passion, which, if permitted to become too luxuriant, readily makes country its God, and injustice and even butchery its religion.

But whilst patriotism as such is no part of Gospel morality, there are duties to the community which are. If the Bible does not commend zeal for one's

country, much less does it lend its sanction to treason and rebellion.

II. THE SCRIPTURES DISTINCTLY RECOGNIZE CIVIL AUTHORITY AND GOVERNMENT AS AN ORDINANCE OF GOD.

Setting aside all philosophic theories of conventional expediency and mutual compacts, the sacred writers lay down the broad proposition that all established government is Divine, if not in its outward form and administrations, still in its substance and its right to oblige its subjects. The word of Jehovah for our instruction is, “*By me kings reign and princes decree justice.*” The inspired Apostle says: “There is no power but of God: *the powers that be are ordained of God;*” ordained by Him from the very beginning, in the social constitution which He then gave man. Our text indeed speaks of government as an “ordinance of *man.*” The Apostle does not mean, however, that it is not ordained of God; but that human agency is also concerned, especially in the production of those specific forms of it which distinguish it in different countries. God has not ordained monarchy, or oligarchy, or democracy, but He has ordained the power out of which men under His providence have fashioned these several forms of administration. With the exception of that polity which God gave to His peculiar people, the Jews, He

has ordained no specific form of government. He has merely constituted man so as to render government a natural necessity, and given the authority for these necessary administrations, whilst He has left the particular kind of government, or form of those administrations, to be shaped according to the ordinary principles which guide men in human affairs. According to its interior substance and authority, therefore, government is Divine, and an ordinance of God; whilst, according to its outward shape it is human, and an "ordinance of man." It is never so divine but that man has something to do with it, and yet never so human but that "the kingdom is the Lord's, and He is the Governor among the nations." Christianity, therefore, recognizes government of all forms, and in all its ramifications. Whatever outward configurations it may be made to assume, it sees Divine authority in them, and prescribes concerning them as a part of that morality which it came to enforce upon men on pain of offending God and incurring His displeasure.

III. CHRISTIANITY DESCRIBES THE SPHERE, OFFICE, AND DUTY OF THE MAGISTRATE, whether it be the king as supreme, the governor, or any other participant in the administrations of public authority.

Places of power were not made for those who oc-

cupy them, nor as mere goals to inflame the ambition of aspiring men. They are ordained of God, and, like all God's appointments, they are meant for the general good. That public functionary who holds his place simply for his own private aggrandizement or glory, is a traitor to his trust, and to Him who gives to his office its authority. God, who ordained magistracy, has prescribed its sphere and duties, and all who participate in its exercise are bound to its great Author to devote themselves honestly and faithfully to those duties. What they are, the text may teach us.

1. One is "*the punishment of evil-doers.*" This is a difficult and uninviting office, but one of the most direct and important commissions of magistracy. For this, in good part, it exists; and the government that falters in it "beareth the sword in vain." It is in consideration of faithfulness and service in this particular, that Paul urges and commands allegiance to established authority. It is for this that he represents government as clothed with the sanctions of God. And where rulership fails to be "a terror to evil," there one of the great purposes for which it exists has been lost. It cannot be, in the present depraved condition of humanity, but that offences will come. Injuries will be inflicted, crimes will be perpetrated, and those of an order so malignant, and

leading to consequences so immediately serious, that were they not checked and crushed, the common bonds of society would be dissolved, order, humanity, and all security cease, and man prey upon man as the beast of the desert upon his fellow-occupant of the wilderness. Society, therefore, must be protected, and grievances redressed, and unbridled passions withstood, and all disorderly outbreaks promptly quelled and avenged, that the innocent may not suffer, and that the guilty may restrain themselves and reform. Perfect justice, of course, cannot be obtained amid the weaknesses and imperfections which adhere to all human administrations; but something like justice, in most instances, can be approximated, and that justice must be administered without stint, though it should require the summary taking of life itself. I know that these last times have bred a school of sentimentalists, who hold up their hands in horror at the infliction of some of those severer penalties which the laws affix to high offences. They would have us believe that crimes are mere lunacies and diseases, demanding the physician rather than the hangman, and that penal severities conflict with the spirit of true benevolence. But I cannot sympathize with that sickly sensibility which, in pity for one vile culprit, would jeopardize the peace and security of a thousand innocent. Nor

can such sorry refinements upon the spirit of philanthropy have much weight, when it is remembered, that the very God of love has ordained: "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." It is enough for me, that in all the laws of heaven and earth, such methodic madnesses are marked for condemnation and punishment. There must be law. Even in the savage state it is found necessary to have some regulations, and if these be violated, to repel force by force. Much more indispensable, then, is law to the existence of civilized society. But law without penalties ceases to be law, and degenerates into mere advice; and penalties fail to be penalties where they are not inflicted when incurred. All such administrations are of course to be tempered with paternity and mercy. Consideration is due to the offender as well as the avengement of his crime. But the transgressor must be punished, and the sanction of God must go with its infliction, or society itself with all its numberless blessings must be abandoned as a wrong. *Individuals*, however, must not be the judges of their own cause or the avengers of their own wrongs, lest revenge might supplant justice, and equity be overlaid by passionate cruelty. Hence the necessity for some strong central power, to take charge of all such administrations, and to employ the proper means to bring offenders to judgment. And

to meet this necessity God has ordained magistracy, and authorized the constitution of "governors," who are "sent," and by Himself commissioned, "for the punishment of evil-doers." It is their business, under obligation to high Heaven, to take cognizance of evil works, to award to them the stripes which they deserve, and to see to it that they are mercifully but efficiently administered. And to this end it is their right and duty to commission the necessary officers, to collect the required forces, and to marshal, if need be, all available portions of the community into arms.

2. Another primary duty of magistracy is *to reward and bless the deserving*. Besides being "for the punishment of evil-doers," our Apostle represents it as being also "for the praise of them that do well:" the word "*praise*" in this case meaning compensation as well as commendation. What he means is what Paul expressed where he says, that the magistrate is the minister of good to them that do good. Not all governments are, to an equal extent, ministers of this gracious sort; not all indeed are in equal positions to be; but such is the true office of all public authority. Government was never designed to burden, oppress, or plunder its subjects; but to return to them more than an equivalent for all that it exacts of them. The good which it is

meant and chartered to confer on the loyal and obedient, is of many sorts, and administered in many ways. It would be useless to attempt to enumerate the varied and multitudinous interests, natural, civil, moral, and spiritual, which it is the business of government to conserve. Life, industry, reputation, property, and all just rights, it is to defend, protect, and guarantee, to the full extent of its power. Arts, literature, morals, and religion, it is to provide for and encourage. And whatever would tend to subvert the public peace, or which the best and most moral portions of the community unite in reprobating as injurious to the general weal, or the interests of piety and righteousness, it is to prohibit and repress. Government was made for the people, not the people for the government; and while God has authorized it to oblige its subjects in all things necessary for the public good, He also holds all public authorities bound to Himself to exercise their powers as ministers of His, whose sole business is to return all the good they can for the respect and obedience they receive.

3. But especially is magistracy bound *to respect and guard the liberty of the subject*. Our Apostle speaks to those whom he addresses “*as free* ;” not so “free” as to use their liberty “for a cloak of maliciousness ;” that is, for purposes of sedition and rebel-

lion ; but “free” to claim certain rights, which nothing but disloyalty can alienate, among which are “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” It is prescribed to governments by the great Lord of all, to shed no innocent blood, to execute righteous judgment, to “deliver the spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor,” to “do no wrong nor violence to the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow.” The word is, “He that ruleth over man must be just, ruling in the fear of God.” “Ye shall not respect persons in judgment ; but you shall hear the small as well as the great ; you shall not be afraid of the face of man ; for the judgment is God’s.” And where magistracy neglects or contravenes these high duties, or is held only to gratify pride, power, and ambition, at the expense of the toils, privations, and sufferings of those whom it was meant to bless and protect, it becomes a monstrous robbery, which God in due time will judge most fearfully.

IV. THE SCRIPTURES ARE ALSO EQUALLY CLEAR AND POINTED IN LAYING DOWN THE DUTIES OF SUBJECTS.

1. *God has made it our duty to render to the government a loyal obedience.* Our text says, “Submit yourselves to every ordinance, whether it be to the king as supreme, or unto governors.” It is written, “Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit

yourselves.” The pointed command of St. Paul is, “Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be, are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.” And the same Apostle, when he came to send forth young ministers, was particular in giving the specific direction, “Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates.” Nor were these directions to hold only with reference to good and Christian governments. If maladministrations could form just ground for exemption, those to whom these precepts were first addressed certainly would have been exempt. Those who held rule over them were among the most faithless, despotic, and disreputable of public officers, whose administrations were characterized by all forms of tyranny and injustice. Where shall we find more detestable names than those of Tiberias, Nero, and Caligula? Where shall we look for more infamous proceedings than those which marked the public affairs of the Roman Empire in those days? And yet these were the precepts by which Christians were to regulate their civil conduct with reference to these authorities.

The Scriptures admit but one exception to the obligation of obedience to existing sovereignties. I

refer now to the rights of private conscience. No government or ruler has any right to impose laws between the soul and God. There is here a direct commerce, and a direct responsibility, which no external powers have any business to disturb. And when they do step aside from their proper province to invade this holy territory (as Nebuchadnezzar did when he commanded all his subjects to worship an image of his own fabrication—or as Darius did when he forbade his subjects to call upon God for the space of thirty days—or as the Jewish Sanhedrim did when it forbade Peter and John to preach as God Himself had directly commanded them); then indeed we may disobey. But even then our disobedience dare go no further than the simple exercise of the rights of private conscience. And if for such conscientious disobedience we incur penalties, we must be willing to submit to them, as the Hebrew children under the command of Nebuchadnezzar—as Daniel under the decree of Darius—and as the Apostles under the persecutions of the Jews and Roman governors. Christianity has but little sympathy with revolutions. God has provided reactions against tyranny in the *natural* impulses of men, which are quite energetic enough without the encouragements of religion. The danger in such cases is not that man will become too passive, but that he will become too resentful and rebel-

lious; not that he will be too slow to endeavor to throw off allegiance to unrighteous government, but that he will become too hasty and indiscriminating in such efforts, and throw everything into confusion and anarchy. As Christians, with the one exception which I have named, our plain duty is, to be subject to the powers that be, whether in all things what we would have them or not. It is the existence of the government, and not so much the character of it, that begets our obligation in the case. The right of revolution is not taught in the Gospel of Jesus.

2. And as we are bound to obey, so *we are also bound to support the government*. Government is a necessity. It has been well described as the only thing that comes between the drawn dagger and the defenceless breast. There can be no safety of life, no liberty, no property, no peace, no order, no useful knowledge, no purity, no religion, without it. The veriest despotism of the East, the most unstable republicanism of the South, even the crude regulations of semi-savage life, are far better than no government at all. When a government is good, efficient, equitable, and just, we can conceive of no greater earthly blessing; but even when it is bad—when it is feeble and sometimes draws the sword against innocence instead of guilt, it is yet preferable to anarchy. Upon no higher grounds, then, than policy and self-defence,

it is just and proper that the government should receive our hearty support.

But this obligation rests upon a higher basis. It is an injunction of God. The Saviour himself says, "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's;" that is, as Paul explains, "tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor." Most beautifully did the Saviour exemplify this precept in that remarkable case, in which He called into requisition His miraculous power to procure the means to pay the taxes that were demanded of Him. And the testimony of Paul is, that the early Christians also paid tribute, and that in this they were but doing their duty. Government cannot be carried on without means. Its officers and servants must be paid, and provided for whilst on duty. There is not a public interest that can be attended to without expense. This is true in times of peace, and still more eminently true in times of war. If the necessary supplies be not furnished, the power of the government is crippled, and its good objects cannot be attained. God has therefore with reason and most benevolently ordained, that men render tribute and custom when lawfully demanded. And so closely are the interests of every individual identified with the stability and efficiency of the government under which he lives,

that when endangered, there is nothing in his possession which he is not bound to hold subservient to that government when necessity calls for it. Of course this obligation is not absolute, or wholly without qualifications. When government ceases to be a blessing,—when it is no longer a terror to evil-doers and a praise and recompense to the virtuous and obedient,—when it turns aside from all the offices and duties for which God has ordained it, and is transmuted into a mere engine of selfish ambition, oppression, and unmodified tyranny,—there is no longer any law of God or man, that I know of, to hold us to its support. The duties of government and the governed are reciprocal. The reasons why we are to obey and help may be found in the blessings of order and security, which are thus to be afforded to us and the community. Governments may be entirely perverted from the objects for which they exist, in which case their right to oblige is forfeited. But such complete perversion does not often occur. Nearly all governments, to a greater or less degree, subserve their ends. Things must come to a very desperate pass, when the public authorities are more a curse than a blessing. And until that pass arrives, I cannot see but that it is part of our Christian obligation, to support and sustain the government, at least in all its lawful demands, to the full extent of our ability.

3. It is also required of us *to respect and pray for the government and those who administer it.* There is nothing in earthly affairs calling for so much wisdom and prudence, as public legislation and rulership. And as every good and perfect gift must come from the Father of lights, and as He has directed us to ask of Him in all our needs, the common spirit of Christianity would teach us to be earnest and frequent in our applications to the throne of grace, in behalf of our rulers and legislators. But God has not left the matter to be reasoned out on general principles. The inspired Apostle's words are: "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men: for kings and for all that are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour." It was thus that David prayed: "Give the king thy judgments, O God, and thy righteousness unto the king's son." Nor can Christian people better show their loyalty, or in any way contribute more to the good and peace of the community in which they live, than by baptizing all their other duties towards the civil authorities with the spirit of supplication, using their power with the God of nations to have Him teach our legislators wisdom, and our exactors righteousness, and Himself to direct in

the administration of all our public affairs. Prayer is mightier than armies. There is nothing within the reach of man that is so potent to decide the course of battles. One Moses, with his hands uplifted in supplication, is a better security for Israel's victory than all her strong fighting men without him. One little David who refers his cause to God, is more than a match for the stoutest and proudest Philistine. And Ahithophel astuteness in conspiracy must needs be confounded and brought to nought, when the supporters of legitimate authority tread softly before God, and prayerfully rest their cause upon his appointment and promises.

V. THE SCRIPTURES PUT ALL THESE OUR DUTIES TO THE STATE ON A RELIGIOUS FOUNDATION.

It is not as a matter of mere policy or patriotism that we are to perform them. They are enjoined as part of our religion. They are requirements of the great Jehovah himself. God, indeed, is not a capricious exactor; the service which He demands is never otherwise than "reasonable." It is for liberty's sake, for society's sake, for our own sake, that these injunctions are laid upon us; but to give them higher, more sacred, more solemnly binding sanctions, they are enjoined as conditions of the Divine favor, as an integral part of acceptable morality and piety. We

are to do these things, says our text, "*for the Lord's sake*," and for the reason that "*so is the will of God*." It is in these things that we are to pay homage to our Maker, and serve Him who "ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will." Religion is something more than church ceremonies, pious meditations, and laudatory chants. It is in no way confined to those performances which are ordinarily embraced in the idea of worship. It is not all comprehended within sanctuary walls, or in the mere routine prescribed in liturgies. It goes out into all the affairs of life. It claims place in the family and in the State, as well as in the closet and in the Church,—in the counting-room, as well as in the pew,—in the offices of government and the duties of subjects, as well as in the offering of prayers and the administration of sacraments. There be those who think it a sin to hold civil office, to have anything to do with politics, and above all to participate even in the most remote manner with what relates to war. With the great confessors who framed the articles of my Church's belief, I hold, that "All authority in the world, established governments and laws, are good and from God," that "Christians may be rulers, judges, and legislators, without sin;" and that, without abatement or compromise of their Christianity, they "may decide cases, pronounce judgments, legally punish transgressors, wage just wars, *and serve*

in them." And as the blessed Prince of Peace himself once said to his disciples, "Let him that hath no sword sell his garment and buy one;" so I believe that there are times and occasions when shouldering arms and knapsack to go forth into the field of battle may be as devout an act as the saying of a prayer, and quite as much an inculcation of the Gospel of Jesus as any other service that can be rendered. We are to serve God in politics as well as in psalms, and if need be, in the trenches as well as in pulpits. For so has Jehovah ordained, and so He holds us bound, for His sake and as His will, that we be subject to the powers that be,—subject to a degree to answer all their legitimate calls, and in all the duties of that subjection to be *His servants*.

From this subject we may therefore learn the intensely practical character of the Christian religion. It does not sever from society and its activities and responsibilities, but holds each one faithfully to his post, and to his duty in it, as part of his obligation to his God. It would not divest rulers and commanders of their offices, but teaches them for what purposes such powers have been constituted, and for what ends and with what sort of spirit they are to be exercised. It would not alienate and disfranchise the citizen, but demands of him to be thankful for

his civil blessings, and to be loyal, obedient, and helpful to his government, as part of his duty to his Creator. The assurances of the Divine favor which it brings us, it does not limit to those who spend their days in cloisters, or who have nothing to offer unto God but saintly words, holy kneelings, and supplicating hymns; but extends them also to the God-fearing soldier, in arms at his country's bidding and for his country's good. It looks to all the relations and pursuits of life, and throws over them a radiant sacredness, and connects the duties of every station with heavenly responsibilities and eternal rewards. In its view there is nothing low nor mean in human life as God has constituted it, but every possible position in which the wants and necessities of human interest can place us, is a sphere in which we may acceptably serve the Almighty, and in which, the heart being right, we may confidently count on the Divine favor and blessing if we are faithful.

Learn also from this subject that it is our solemn duty and part of our obligation to God, as taught us by our holy religion, to abhor and discountenance treason and rebellion, and whatever would contribute to the subversion of the government under which we enjoy so many mercies. If subjection to and support of the powers that be, be part of our Christian

duty, how can we be Christians and take part with traitors and rebels, or connive at sedition? On this point let the words of the holy Apostle be deep-written on every heart: "Whosoever resisteth the power (or legally constituted authority), resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation." I will not say that a Christian may never sanction or participate in attempts to stay or retrench the encroachments of usurpation and despotic power. Cases may occur in which the crimes and oppressions of government rise to a pitch to excuse any one in joining any revolt which presents a reasonable hope of establishing things upon a better basis. Revolutions against the enormities of uncontrolled dominion have occurred, for taking part in which no one could be blamed. But there are many things which Christianity will excuse, which it will not justify. He who, when he had a right, would not be made a king, gives no liberty to those who have none to put out those who have. To "despise dominion," and to "speak evil of dignities," is rated among the characteristics of the worst men in the most evil times; and from such we are to separate ourselves, that we be not partakers of their sins.

Be encouraged also from this subject to believe, that what you do or suffer in obedience to your

country's call, is so much in the direction of duty to your God, and will not be forgotten of Him. If it be to the camp or to battle that you are summoned, go, as an act of obedience to God, and do your duty faithfully in His fear. If you are called to relinquish dear friends, husbands, brothers, sons, and those in whom of all on earth you are most interested, that they may serve the country by bearing arms for its support, as an act of devotion to your Father in heaven let them go, and give to them your blessing, and to Heaven your thanks, that they have hearts brave enough to move unflinching in the trying work. And if in the day of conflict they should be sacrificed, there remains this consolation for them and you,—that they fall at the post of duty, and sink to their rest amid the blessings of men and the benedictions of God.

And finally, let us be reminded by this subject of the supreme allegiance which we all owe to the King of kings and the Lord of lords. If it is a matter of so much importance to be obedient to earthly laws, and to employ ourselves loyally for earthly governments, how much more important and binding is it that we be not disobedient to the laws of Heaven, and see to it that we are not traitors and rebels against the eternal government of God? If

indignation, contempt, condemnation, and death, are righteously due to those who betray their country and despise and seek to subvert the blessed institutions under which they have been protected, reared, and prospered ; who shall speak the deserved doom of him who betrays the God to whom he owes his being, or acts the part of treason to the King by whom alone all things consist ! And if to live and die in the position of a loyal subject to the country here, be a matter of so much praise and affectionate remembrance, how much more blessed to fall as a faithful soldier of the Lord of hosts, fighting with sin, with ignorance, with error, and all the enemies of God and truth !

“ How sleep the brave, who sink to rest,
By all their country’s wishes blest !
When Spring, with dewy fingers cold,
Returns to deck their hallowed mould,
She there shall weave a sweeter sod,
Than fancy’s feet have ever trod.

“ By fairy hands their knell is rung,
By forms unseen their dirge is sung ;
There Honor comes, a pilgrim gray,
To bless the turf that wraps their clay,
And Freedom shall awhile repair,
To dwell a weeping hermit there.”

But a voice from the sublimest heavens says :
“ *Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord ;*

Yea, saith the Spirit, for they do rest from their labors, and their works do follow them !” And so hath the Prophet said of old: “The ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: and they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.”

God grant that we may all be among the faithful on earth; that we may be among the ransomed in heaven!

PRAYER FOR THE COUNTRY.

ALMIGHTY GOD, the King of nations and the Lord of lords; accept, we beseech Thee, the humble adoration which we now offer unto Thee, and be pleased to hear our entreaties in behalf of our afflicted country. Have mercy upon us, O Lord, and turn away Thine anger from us. We have been a proud, unthankful, and disobedient people. Thy laws we have disregarded; Thy Gospel we have neglected; and Thy judgments we have richly deserved. Yet, O most merciful Father, forsake us not in our distresses, and suffer not Thy waves and Thy billows to go over us. Remember Thy congregation which Thou hast purchased of old, the rod of Thine inheritance which Thou hast redeemed; and be not angry with the prayer of Thy people. Give unto us due penitence for our sins, that we may humble ourselves under Thy mighty hand, and not be left as a prey to the destroyer. Show Thy mercy, O Lord, and grant us Thy salvation. Give unto our rulers wisdom and strength, and to our people loyal and pious hearts.

that they may always incline to Thy holy appointments. Bless with Thy favor the President of the United States, and all others in authority, that they may truly please Thee, and rule in Thy fear, and with a discretion and efficiency suited to the perils into which we have fallen. Guide them in counsel and establish them in purpose, that they may maintain what is right and just. Have mercy upon those who trouble the nation, and turn their hearts, that they may submit themselves to the powers that be, and not rebel against Thine ordinances. Bring to nought all secession, sedition, and disaffection, and avert from us the horrors of prolonged and bloody war. Be with the officers of our army and the commanders of our ships, and all subject to them, that they may be faithful to their solemn obligations, and efficient in their trying duties. Sustain the soldier in his exposure and privations, and cause him always to remember Thee, and to put his trust in the Lord of hosts. Comfort and keep the friends whom he leaves behind him, and stay their hearts. Let Thy pity be upon us, O God, that we may be spared from seeing brothers shed each other's blood. But if Thou wilt that battles come, O help Thy servants amid the strife of arms, that the conflict may be brief and decisive, and that liberty and peace, together with the Union and the Constitution, which Thou gavest unto

our fathers, may be established to us and our children. And grant, O most merciful Father, to hasten the time when discords, rebellions, and wars shall cease, and the righteousness, peace, and joy of Thy kingdom, become the perpetual inheritance of this now troubled, tearful, and down-trodden world.

Hear us, gracious God, for the sake of Thy dear Son, our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

